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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS: CALIFORNIA DELEGATION FOCUSES ON
FLOOD PROTECTION, CLIMATE ADAPTATION, AND TRADE

¶1. A delegation led by California Senate Republican Leader Dick Ackerman visited The Netherlands December 8-13 to discuss flood protection, climate adaptation, and an upcoming trade mission to San Francisco.

¶2. Delegation members included Senator Christine Kehoe, (Democrat - San Diego), Senator Abel Maldonado (Republican - Central Coast and Chair, Senate Agriculture Committee), Assemblywoman Nicole Parra (Democrat - Hanford and Chair, Assembly Agriculture Committee) and 10 members of the California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy (CFEE) - including President Patrick Mason and 6 board members.

¶3. The delegation met with representatives from the Netherlands Water Partnership, Rijkswaterstaat, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and Association of Dutch Water Boards to discuss Dutch flood protection strategy, technology and financing and their new approach to living with water and adapting to climate change. The delegation also visited Maeslant, a storm surge barrier constructed as an alternative to continual levy reinforcement and designed to protect Rotterdam from North Sea storms, and Noordwaard, a city that has widened flood plains and is planning for future climate change by giving rivers more space.

¶4. The meetings generated intense interest, discussion, and appreciation of Dutch expertise. Following the meetings Mason invited Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs official Maurits Henkemans -- an emissions trading scheme expert -- to attend a January 25-26 conference on the California Greenhouse Gas Initiative. CFEE also discussed hosting a flood control and protection conference for a Dutch delegation in late April or early May.

¶5. The delegation also met with the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency (NFIA) and the U.S. Commercial Service to discuss the September 2007 Hi-Tech Connections trade mission to San Francisco. The conversation covered ways to attract American key note speakers and attendees from corporations and knowledge institutes in the areas of nanotechnology, e-health, e-education, and e-government. NFIA considered the meetings a success, as the delegation offered to start a dialogue and lend their support. Senator Kehoe also invited the mission to visit San Diego-based Biocomm, an organization of health, computer, and software companies during the trip.
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